



The Library  
of the  
University of North Carolina




Endowed by The Dialectic  
and  
Philanthropic Societies

This **BOOK** may be kept out **TWO WEEKS ONLY**, and is subject to a fine of **FIVE CENTS** a day thereafter. It was taken out on the day indicated below:

--	--	--





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



THE

# TORTOISE-SHELL COMB.



SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:

General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union,  
and Church Book Society,

762 BROADWAY.

1859.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1858,  
By the GENERAL PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION,  
AND CHURCH BOOK SOCIETY,  
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the  
Southern District of New York.

---

WILLIAM DENTSE,  
STEREOTYPER AND ELECTROTYPEN,  
183 William Street, N. Y.

---

PUDNEY & RUSSELL,  
PRINTERS,  
79 John Street, N. Y.



Library, Univ. of  
North Carolina

PUBLISHED

BY

The Easter Offerings

OF

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

OF

GRACE CHURCH,

GALENA, ILLINOIS.



# Contents.

---

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.—THE FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL.....	7
“ II.—THE LOST GIFT.....	20
“ III.—THE PINK RIBBON .....	45
“ IV.—THE FAIR .....	56
“ V.—THE DISCOVERY .....	77
“ VI.—NELLIE BROWN GOES TO CHURCH .....	85
“ VII.—JESSIE'S VISIT TO THE HUT .....	92




THE  
TORTOISE-SHELL COMB.

---

Chapter First.

THE FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL.

N a retired part of Western New York, not a great many years ago, at the opening of a very beautiful wood, there stood a common District School-house. It was a log building, long and narrow, and prettily situated on a knoll. This rural spot was selected by the farmers as being the most central point, and therefore the most convenient, and really did credit to their taste. The children had trodden a path round one side of the knoll to a spring of fresh water, where a barrel was

sunk instead of a pump. There were other springs in the wood, and together they formed a gleeful little brook, which was never dry the season through, but twisted and turned its pretty course over a pebbly channel, and through the wood and a meadow, till it was met by a larger one, murmuring and babbling to it. Here, like a coy, modest little brook, as she was, she made a few retreats round clumps of barberry bushes and grassy hillocks. Then, peering out again like a gleam of sunshine, she ran along a narrow strip of verdure which grew narrower and narrower, till finally our little wild-wood brook was wooed and wedded by the boisterous meadow stream, and together they went prattling down the course to an old mill you might just see in the distance, and where, in their united strength, they turned the wheel which ground the corn and wheat for all the farmers for miles around.

Such strength is there in union often times! Alone, these streams could have done no more than freshen the wood, or give drink to a few cattle. Together, they turned a mill. On the other side of the knoll could be seen, peering up through the green foliage of elms, oaks, and other beautiful forest trees, the spire of a little country church, and under the shade of these trees reposed the dead. To me it is sweet to see a church thus gathering within its sacred inclosure both the living and the dead, and it is not an unapt illustration of the Communion of Saints—all one in that blessed ark of safety, the Church—all one in Christ. A great many children attended this school in the wood, and among them the two little girls whose story I am about to tell.

The elder of the two was Jessie Carter. She was an only child, and a great darling with her parents. When she was a very little girl, her father lived in the great city

of New York ; but now they were living on a farm not far from the school-house I have described. I should like to tell my readers a thousand pleasant things of Jessie's farm life, for she loved the country, and thought even the willow-tree, which drooped its long branches over the trough where the cattle drank, more beautiful than anything she ever saw in the gay shop windows of the city. But I have so many things to tell of her school days, and of her school-mate, Nellie Brown, that I cannot do so now.

It was on the first day of the summer quarter Mrs. Carter took Jessie to school for the first time in her life, and though she had passed her tenth birth-day she had not been much instructed in lessons at home. So it is not surprising that, as she sat on the chair in front of her desk, listening to and observing everything, at first she felt embarrassed. And as class after class took their places on a long form in front of Mr. Cole, the teacher,



and children younger and smaller than herself gave long answers to difficult questions in history, geography, and grammar, she was discouraged and ashamed of her ignorance.

“Oh !” said she to herself, “I’m nothing but a dunce, and they will all think me so, too,” and she burst into tears. This frightened her the more, and hiding her face in her hands she sobbed aloud. Mr. Cole was a kind man, and drawing her close to his side, he wiped her eyes with her handkerchief and asked her why she felt so unhappy.

“Oh, sir !” said she, reassured by his gentle voice and manner, “I can never, never learn lessons like these little girls. They are too hard for me.”

“Then you will not have to learn such, my child,” answered the considerate teacher. “These little girls have been a long time learning what you have heard them recite so

well this morning. I am sure you will do well ; so dry your eyes and go to your seat now."

Jessie felt grateful for this kindness, and had become quite composed, and again interested in her observations, when the school was again interrupted by the entrance of a woman leading a little girl by the hand. This woman was a widow by the name of Brown, who lived in a hut in the far end of the wood. She was a basket-maker by trade, and Jessie had often bought little baskets of her at the farm, but she had never seen the little girl before. She, like Jessie, was an only child, and though, owing to her extreme poverty, she had not been indulged as Jessie had always been, she was a great darling with her poor mother.

Jessie observed Nellie very closely, and began to feel very sorry for her, for she saw that she was frightened just as she had been, and clung to her mother's skirts ; and

when the master spoke to her she hung her head and did not answer him. And when her mother left her, Jessie could see that her young heart was full, and that she could scarce keep from crying. And she felt glad when Mr. Cole led her by the hand to the desk next hers, and told her it should be her seat.

The child's name was Nellie—Nellie Brown. Jessie forgot her own troubles, and began to think how she could make Nellie feel more at her ease.

If we earnestly desire to do good and watch for opportunities, they will always occur. So it happened to Jessie. In a little while Nellie's new spelling-book slipped from her lap and fell upon the floor, and Jessie jumped from her seat and picked it up, and as she handed it to her she whispered: "It will soon be play-time, Nellie; then we will go to the spring together and get a drink."

Nellie Brown did not answer Jessie ; but a smile passed over her sweet, pretty face, and from that moment Jessie loved her.

In a little while the master rang a bell, and then all the children left their seats.

The boys took their caps from the pegs on their side of the school-room, and the girls their bonnets from theirs ; for it was play-time, and all scampered out, running and screaming down the hill to the spring.

Some took the footpath, and others ran straight down the hill, but all made the spring the point of destination, where each one stopped to drink from a tin cup that was there for that purpose. Jessie and Nellie still feeling embarrassed and strange among so many wild, playful children, stood a little apart from them, and silently watched them with great interest.

There was a great deal of fun and scrambling for the cup, and some quarrelling, for

each scholar as he drank threw the cup upon the grass, and whoever first touched it had the next drink; and it was not always easy to tell who did first touch it. At this time two of the larger boys caught it at the same instant, one by the handle and one by the side, and neither was willing to give it up. At first they pulled playfully for it; but soon the angry blood mounted to their very temples, and they fell to kicking and swearing most dreadfully. Jessie shuddered with fear as the naughty words poured out of their mouths; but Nellie looked on only with curiosity.

“Oh, Nellie, it is dreadful!” said Jessie.

“What is dreadful?” answered Nellie, with a puzzled, inquiring look.

“Why, the language of these boys—how they swear!”

“I guess all boys swear, don’t they?” said Nellie.

“No! no! Nellie, good boys do not

swear; they break God's commandment when they do. Oh, it is awful to take God's holy name in vain! I cannot bear to hear it. Let us go away."

And Jessie took Nellie by the hand, and they wandered off a little way into the wood, and sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree. Jessie put her arm round Nellie, and there they sat and looked at the children scattered in groups through the wood. Some were sailing tiny boats down the stream, and others, with shoes and stockings off, and holding their skirts clear of the water, were timidly wading from side to side, while most of the larger boys were climbing the slender saplings, and bending them down for swings.

Jessie and Nellie looked on without once moving from their seat, pleased and thoughtful, till the master, from the open window, rang the bell, when they all scampered into school again, merry and cheerful, except the

two boys who had quarrelled. They still looked flushed and discontented.

When Jessie went to bed that night, she could not sleep for thinking over the events of this her first day at school; and oftener than upon anything else did her mind dwell upon the strange calmness of Nellie when the boys were swearing so shockingly. She felt sorry Nellie had shown so much indifference, and she could not understand it. Jessie liked Nellie very much, and she fell asleep wondering.

Jessie was too young to make out and account for the difference of feeling in herself and Nellie, and perhaps, dear reader, you are too; so I will tell you. Jessie had been religiously brought up. From her earliest childhood she had been taught to love God, the Bible, and her Catechism, and to take them as her rule of action, while Nellie had had no such advantages. Her mother, the Widow Brown, as she was called,



was a hard-working, sickly woman, moral and kind, but without the love or fear of God in her heart. She toiled and labored with the sun, through all the week, for the bread that perisheth, cheered by naught but her devoted love to her child; and when the Lord's day came, instead of devoting at least a part of it to her child's instruction, or taking her to worship God, and to refresh her soul with the precious manna of His word, in the little church in the valley, she hailed its dawn with only a creature joy that a day of rest had come—rest for the weary body—and only marked it by a more tidy appearance than usual, and by rest from her labor.

Thus Nellie, a child of peculiar natural sweetness and goodness of heart, really knew no more of the great God those boys were trifling with, or of her own responsibilities as a child of His mercy, than a heathen child. And it is to show the bearing of edu-




cation upon the happiness of these little immortals committed to our keeping, both in this life and that which is to come, that I am writing this story; and I pray God of His great goodness to bless it to those who may chance to read it.

MS. A. 1. 1. 10

## Chapter Second.

### THE LOST GIFT.

ESSIE and Nellie soon became accustomed to school, and learned to study as well as any of the children—at least Jessie did. They also became great favorites—Jessie, because she was truthful and very playful and ardent; and Nellie, partly because she was affectionate and obliging, but mostly because Jessie loved her and was not ashamed of her, though she was the very poorest and most meanly dressed child in the school.

Only one thing disturbed this friendship. It was Nellie's entire ignorance of everything connected with religion.

Among so many children, gathered from all ranks of society, of course many things were seen and heard, as shocking to Jessie's pious mind as the swearing about the cup, on the first day of the quarter; and it still grieved her to notice that Nellie never shrank from these things—never seemed to know, even, that they were wrong. And often, as on that first day of her acquaintance, she would lie awake on her pillow, thinking of these things, and how she might influence her young companion, and teach her something about God and heaven. And oftentimes she would pray for Nellie.

By the side of the path which led from the school-house to the road, between the last two trees, the boys had fixed a rude but pleasant seat to rest themselves upon; and one evening, as Nellie and Jessie, who always walked thus far on their homeward course together, came to the seat, they sat down; and as they were pleasantly talking

over the affairs of the day, as they often did at that very spot, it came into Jessie's mind that it would be a good time and place for her to begin to teach Nellie. She had often, at night, made up her mind to do so; but she was a very delicate child, and when the day came she was afraid, and did not know how to begin. Perhaps she did not ask God to help her. This time, however, she seemed to have a strength not her own, and she began immediately.

"Nellie," said she, "how little you know about God and the Bible, and about what is right and what is wrong. Do you know the Lord's Prayer?"

"No," said Nelly; "I wish I did. I never had any body to teach me such things."

"I will teach you, then, Nellie," said the delighted Jessie. "I will teach you; we will sit on this seat—what a nice place it is!—every night after school, long enough to

say it over once or twice, till you know it. I wish it was in a place where we could kneel down; but we can clasp our hands."

And, with clasped hands, Nellie then, for the first time in her life, repeated the Lord's Prayer. And all through the summer they would stop at the seat; and in this way Jessie taught Nellie a great many verses from the Bible, and several beautiful hymns. Nellie was very much interested, and would try to think of all the good things Jessie told her, and was very particular to say prayers night and morning, till she was troubled about the tortoise-shell comb. That seemed to break in upon her new happiness and knowledge, as sin came into Eden, changing everything. She did not love to learn about her duty and her Saviour any more; what before was lovely and pleasant to her, now became irksome and hateful. But I will tell my story.

The fresh green of summer had faded into

the gay tints of autumn, and the leaves fallen in bright carpets over the mouldering, or, rather, sleeping flowers of the wood, and winter had once or twice shaken his white locks in the school-room windows, when, one morning, Jessie came to school rather late. She hung her hood and cloak on her nail, and walked to her seat with a bold though embarrassed air; indeed, her motions were so quick and bustling that the little girls all looked up from their lessons at her and smiled.

Jessie unlocked her desk too, and took out her books and threw them on her desk, and then sat down and began to study, without her usual smile and recognition of Nellie, who still sat at the desk next hers. Jessie did not smile, but I am sure my little readers will, when I tell them the reason of her embarrassment.

It was this. She had, the Saturday evening before, received a tortoise-shell comb, as

a Christmas gift from a friend of her mother's from the city, and had come to school this morning with her beautiful brown hair, which usually fell in ringlets over her shoulders, tucked up behind like a grown-up lady's, and fastened with the new comb, and she felt *strangely*, and assumed an air of independence.

At play-time Jessie had gotten over her embarrassment, and the little girls all flocked around her, anxious to see, and handle, and hear about the new comb; and not one of them rejoiced more sincerely or more heartily with her, upon her good fortune in receiving so beautiful a gift, than did Nellie Brown. At that time the temptation to possess it had never for a moment assailed her heart.

It was Monday morning. Jessie wore the comb, and the last exercise for Monday afternoon in the country school was a spelling lesson with definitions, and every child ca-

pable of learning the lesson was expected to know it. Now, of all Jessie's lessons she loved this the best, and she loved, too, to be called, as she really was, the best speller in the school; and she always studied it very hard. Nellie, on the contrary, disliked it, and could not bear to study it; and this evening Nellie's eye often wandered from her book to Jessie's comb, and presently the thought came into her mind: "How easily I might take that comb out of Jessie's head, and she would not know it, and how it would tease her! she is always teasing somebody, I wonder how she would like it herself?"

Jessie was so engaged she did not notice Nellie's idleness at all, or the way she looked at her comb; indeed, she did not notice anything but her lesson. She would study five or six words over and over a great many times in a loud whisper, rocking herself backwards and forwards in her chair; then she would cover her eyes with both her hands,



and recite them to herself. This is the way Jessie always learned this lesson.

As soon as Nellie thought about taking the comb, she determined to do it, but only to tease Jessie; she meant to give it back directly. Looking at the comb once more, Nellie said to herself, "Next time Jessie covers her eyes with her hands I'll try." In a little while Jessie's hands were over her eyes again.

"Now is my time," said Nellie; and she raised her little hand, and so gently took the comb out that Jessie did not see or feel the movement at all. Nellie quickly raised the lid of her desk and dropped the comb in, and covered it with some papers; then locking the desk, she, too, began to study with a zeal quite equal to Jessie's. Jessie's hair gradually untwisted itself, and fell in its own accustomed ringlets over her shoulders, making her feel the more at ease, and she studied on, all unconscious of her loss.

After the lesson was recited, Nellie watched Jessie very closely. "Now," thought she, "she will miss it, and I shall have my fun." But Jessie, who had got through her lesson without missing, was still too much excited to think of anything else. And as she gathered up her books and put them in her desk for the night and locked it, and then took her hood from its nail and tied it under her chin, she talked so incessantly about the lesson that she did not notice the anxious sparkle of Nellie's eye, who every moment expected and hoped she would put her hand to her head, and then turn round in a storm of passion and say, "Who has got my comb?" for Nellie knew Jessie was a passionate child.

But Jessie still talked of the lesson. "Oh," said she, "it was a really tough lesson; and I liked to have missed the word '*principal*,' for as I was spelling it I meant to give the definition of the word '*principle*,' so I just escaped. But come along, Nellie, we won't

stop at the seat to-night; mamma always likes me to hurry home on Mondays to tell whether I have missed."

Nellie was very much disappointed, but consoled herself thinking Jessie would certainly miss it by morning, and that she could then have her fun in teasing her.

The next morning, as Nellie came bounding into the wood, she saw a group of girls gathered around Jessie. "There!" said Nellie, "she has missed the comb; and I'll warrant they are forming some plan for looking for it through the wood, and I'll let them look ever so long." Nellie was almost out of breath when she reached the girls.

"Oh, Nellie, Nellie!" said Jessie, bursting out from the excited circle. "What do you think? some one has stolen my comb—my beautiful Christmas gift; isn't it too bad? Would you believe any one could be so bad, so mean? Why, I'd rather be dead than steal!"

“I don’t believe any one has stolen your comb,” said Nellie, and a feeling of honest indignation took the place of the expression of pleased mischief which a moment before had lurked in her usually placid face. “I do not believe any one has stolen your comb—you must have lost it.”

Nellie said “You must have lost it” without knowing why she said it. She was frightened, and Satan put it into her unguarded heart to say so.

“Indeed,” answered Jessie, “I never lost it. I could not have lost it, for I remember perfectly, after we came in from play, that I had my comb in my hair; and as I took my spelling-book out of my desk to study, my head felt so uncomfortably, because my hair was twisted so tightly, I took my comb out and fixed my hair over; and just as I was putting the comb in again, I caught Mr. Cole’s eye, and he smiled, and I felt so ashamed I thought I would never come to

school again with my hair done up like a grown-up lady's. And I could not," continued she, "have lost it going home, my hood fits so tightly, and my hair was in my neck; it must have been so before I put my hood on, for the moment I entered the parlor at home, before I had taken off my things, mamma noticed it, and said, 'I am glad, Jessie, you have come home a little girl again; I could not bear to send such a little old woman to school this morning.' Then I missed my comb for the first time, but I did not lose it; no," said she, growing more and more angry, "no, no one need tell me I lost it. I did not lose it; some one has stolen it."

Just then the bell rang, and with flushed, excited faces the little girls went into school.

Poor Nellie! she did not know what to do, and grew more and more agitated every moment. "What, what shall I do?" she was all the time saying to herself. "What shall I do? I did not steal the comb; I am not a

thief. I did not want the comb ; I do not want it now. Oh ! why did I say, ‘ You must have lost it ? ’ but for that I might have given the hateful thing right back ; but now if I do, Jessie will certainly think I stole it ; if it was anybody but Jessie—I can’t let Jessie think me a thief. I’m not a thief.”

Nellie would have cried, only she knew if she did it would betray her secret. She suffered from these anxious thoughts all day ; and when at evening they rested upon the seat between the trees, and Jessie, calmed and gentle now, so sweetly heard her say the Lord’s Prayer, she thought she would tell her all ; and perhaps she would have done so, but as soon as Jessie said “ Amen ” to the prayer, she turned to Nellie, and said, “ Nellie, all this afternoon I have been trying to feel forgiveness in my heart towards the thief who stole my comb ; but I could not, it seemed to me so wicked and so mean ; but while we were saying the prayer, I felt as if I could

forgive anybody anything—it is so sweet to think God, for Christ's sake, will forgive me, and make me His child forever and forever. And I do think I have forgiven her from my heart, and I shall pray for her every night that He will give her His grace, that she may confess to me that she has taken it, and truly repent of it, so that God will forgive her too."

Jessie's speaking in this way, as if there was no doubt at all that the person who had the comb was a thief, decided the struggle in Nellie's mind. "Oh," thought she, "Jessie will never believe me if I tell her; she will not believe that I did not mean to say, 'You must have lost it'—she will only think me a thief. Oh! I am not a thief! I did not steal it." And Nellie made up her mind not to tell her then, at all events. But she thought she would ask God to forgive her, and then she would be happy again; and turning to Jessie, she said to her, "Jessie, why do you



say God will not forgive the girl unless she confesses to you? I should think it were a great deal better to have God's forgiveness than yours, He is so great; and you say He will punish us if we do not get His forgiveness before we die."

"Oh, yes, Nellie, she must confess to God. I meant so, of course; but she must confess to me first, and give me back my comb, because it is mine, and that is the way the Bible teaches us to do. Don't you remember that beautiful Bible verse in the Prayer Book?"

"Why, Jessie, you know I never even saw a Prayer Book. You are always forgetting that."

"Oh, yes, Nellie; I will teach it to you now. *If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* That means that if we are truly penitent, God will forgive us our sins for Christ's sake, and



make our hearts just as pure as if we had not sinned. But, Nellie, it is very late; we must go home now. But oughtn't we to be very thankful for such a Bible verse as that? Only think, if the person who has my comb repents, and gives it back to me, and seeks God's forgiveness, she can be just as happy, or almost as happy, as if she had never taken it."

And the little girls kissed each other, and then parted, each for her home, but with what different thoughts and feelings! All the way, and, indeed, almost all the night and the next day, Nellie could think of nothing but how she might dispose of the comb in such a way as not to be discovered. Poor ignorant child! she never once thought to kneel down and ask God to guide her by His Spirit; on the contrary, she trusted so entirely to her own strength, that she forgot to say her ordinary prayer that night; and as she lay upon her troubled pillow, Satan entered into her

empty heart, and filled it with his wily suggestions.

“Nellie,” whispered he, “I’ll help you out of your troubles. You did not steal the comb—you never once thought of doing such a thing; so don’t be fool enough to make Jessie think you did, when you know you didn’t. I’ll tell you what to do. Get up early to-morrow morning, and go to school before even the master is there. Take the key from under the door-step, where he always hangs it; open the door; get the comb from your desk, and hasten down to the spring with it. There the ground is always wet and soft; force the comb between the sods and the barrel, letting the teeth show just a little bit. Some one will be sure to see it, and take it out and give it back to Jessie, and there will be an end of the trouble.”

Nellie listened to this bad advice, and determined to follow it out. She knew she

must do it the next morning, if at all ; for on Saturday one half hour was regularly devoted to cleansing and arranging the desks, when everything was taken out and dusted, and then put neatly back ; and Nellie knew she could not possibly hide it from Jessie.

In the morning, Nellie's mind was so occupied with her plan, she did not notice that, during the night, the weather had suddenly changed, and she ran to school, entirely regardless of the exceeding beauty which everywhere surrounded her. Every little twig and blade of grass was bending beneath its burden of light, feathery snow, all glistening now in the beams of the morning sun. Neither did she feel the cold, which was fast becoming extreme.

On she tripped, not happy exactly, but resolute, and she had no thought of anything but her plan, till arrived at the very school-room door. There she halted one moment in surprise to find it already open. She entered,

however; and as she saw the master was too much engaged arranging the lessons for the day to notice her, she passed on to her desk, and, unlocking it, she dropped the comb into her dinner-basket, which was hanging on her arm, and went out again.

With a quickened step she started for the spring. At the top of the hill she stood still, again foiled and surprised. The spring, which usually moistened and made green the grass for several feet around, was now encircled with a wreath of beautiful frozen foam; several boys, too, were on the ground, strapping their skates. Then, for the first time, she thought of the change in the weather, and her eye for a moment rested upon, and delighted in, the beauty of the wood, all clothed in white, so pure and sparkling, and the frozen brook, like a silver thread, winding through.

But Nellie Brown had no time to lose, and she turned from this beautiful scene, and

thoughtfully and slowly, and without any fixed purpose in her mind, she went behind the school-house. There was nothing there to help her, and she went on to the other side. Under the spout, at the end of the house, was a large cask for the purpose of catching rain-water. The cask did not stand flat on the ground, owing to the unevenness of it, but one side was raised a little way by a pile of bricks. Near this cask was a flat stone, where the children, in the fall, had cracked butternuts, and by the flat stone was the round one they cracked them with.

Nellie saw the cask and the stones, and instantly resolved to make use of them. And stooping down, with her mitten she brushed the light snow from the stones, and, opening the basket, she took out the comb. For one moment she looked at it. "Oh, how beautiful it is!" said she; "and how I wish Jessie had it! Dear, dear Jessie! I love her better than anybody in the world; but she would

not love me if I were to tell her—she would only think me a thief; and she said she would rather be dead than steal—and I did not steal it—I did not steal it.”

Nellie's tears fell fast upon the comb, and as she said “I did not steal it,” she laid it on the flat stone, and with the round one she pounded it into a thousand pieces; then, gathering them quickly up, every little bit, she threw them away under the cask.

Poor, poor Nellie! The deed was done. She did not stop to give it a thought or a look, but retraced her steps round the school-house, and, as she turned the corner on the other side, the first eye she met was Jessie's.

“Why, Nellie,” said Jessie, coming to meet her, “are you here? Where have you been?”

“Round here,” said Nellie, and she turned deadly pale.

“Looking at the graves?” continued Jessie.

“Yes.”

“Does your father lie there, Nellie?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, does he?” said Jessie; and she threw her arms round Nellie’s neck and kissed her. “Nellie,” said she, “mamma says it isn’t well for people to think too much of the graves of their friends. She says they had better think of their happy souls in paradise. Did your father die happy, Nellie?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, then, dear, dear Nellie, don’t cry so. There is a morning coming—I don’t know when, but it is coming—when Jesus Christ will come again into the world. He will come in the clouds with the angels, and He will bring all the happy souls with Him, and give each soul back to its own body. If you die happy, Nellie, you and your father will see each other then, and we all shall see and know the Saviour. But, Nellie dear, do try and stop crying, and come with us to slide. There are ten minutes yet before school.

Presently Nellie might have been seen



with the other little girls, gliding up and down the polished stream as rapidly as any of them, and apparently she was as merry and playful as any one of them. But Nellie Brown was not what she seemed; she was not happy. There was a weight upon her young heart she had never known before; it was heavier than in her first struggles about the comb, and she felt that if she could but recover it, she would give it right back to Jessie. All day long she tugged and pulled at this weight, and sang to it the old song—"I did not steal it." But it would not go away, it would not be soothed.

She did not know that the Lord is a very present help in trouble, so she did not seek Him. She did not pray. For days and nights together she strove thus with her conscience, till Time only—that old hewer who can chip off and smooth the rough edges of even sorrow itself—gradually lulled her with the conviction that she had not stolen the




comb ; and with this conviction came a temporary relief and return of her cheerful feelings ; but her poor little heart was hardened in the process.

She came at last to feel that, as she had not stolen the comb, she could not, after all, have done anything so very, very bad ; and she daily became less prayerful ; less and less conscientious ; less and less thoughtful of her sin. Before I go on to show my young readers how this paved the way for another sin in Nellie, and a worse one, I will beg them to pause and think what a sad, sad thing it is for a child to yield to the first great temptation which assails him. And if he has yielded, how much better—no matter how severe the struggle may be (and we never can turn from the evil way and do that which is right without a struggle)—how much better to confess his fault immediately and seek forgiveness from the injured person and from God.

Nellie Brown did not steal the comb. She did no wrong even in taking it in the playful way in which she did it; but in keeping it, and then destroying it, she was guilty of a sin almost as great.

## Chapter Third.

### THE PINK RIBBON.

 HAVE said that Nellie Brown prayed less, and became less thoughtful, and less conscientious, after her great fault. We will see in this chapter if she became any better or any happier for it.

It was nearly two months after the affair of the tortoise-shell comb, when one morning Jessie stopped studying rather suddenly, and nudging Nellie, attracted her attention to a little parcel she took out of her pocket. Untying the string of this little parcel she displayed a great variety of pretty silks, and bits of morocco and sewing silks. "How

pretty they are!" whispered Nellie. "What are you going to do with them?"

"Make needle-books and pin-cushions for the fair," answered Jessie.

"When will it be?"

"Next week, Thursday. Are you going, Nellie?"

"Oh, I do not know. If my mother will let me, I shall. It's a long way to the Court House, you know. Oh, what a beautiful piece of pink ribbon that is! What are you going to make of it?"

"This plaid, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"I think I shall ravel out the ends for a doll's scarf. There is to be a table at the fair devoted to dolls."

"Nellie and Jessie whispering!" exclaimed the master, just at that moment, with a loud voice, and giving a terrific rap with his ruler upon the table at his side. The startled Jessie quickly gathered up her silks and

thrust them loosely into her pocket, and did not perceive that the choice pink ribbon was hanging nearly half out. For some reason or other at the playtime on that day, Nellie did not get out with the other girls, and she felt irritated in consequence, and walked down the hill rather sulkily, instead of running as she usually did. When about half way down what did she see twisted round a twig of a bush but Jessie's pink plaid ribbon. The wind had blown it from her pocket, and it had caught in this way on the bush. The bush was a little out of the path, and Nellie went to it and untwisted the ribbon.

"I am so glad I found this ribbon! I have a right to keep what I find," said she; and looking all round her to see that no one observed her, she put it in her bosom.

After many and very painful struggles, Nellie Brown had once before yielded to Satan when tempted to do a great wrong. Now she became an easier prey to his tempt-

ations. As soon as Nellie put the ribbon in her bosom, she hastened down the hill to slide on the brook with Jessie, and seemed gayer and more playful than usual.

Since the weather had become so very cold, Jessie and Nellie had omitted their prayer and talk at the seat between the trees. But this evening, as they came to it, Jessie proposed they should brush off the snow and sit down for a few minutes. "For," said she, "I did not half show you my silks this morning, and I entirely forgot them at play-time and at noon." The truth is, Nellie had managed so to entertain her that she had quite forgotten them until now.

They sat down on the seat, and Jessie soon emptied her pockets again of her gay treasures, and Nellie admired them very much, and made Jessie tell her what she was going to do with each particular piece.

"But the plaid ribbon—the pink plaid for the scarf—what has become of that? I cer-

tainly put it in my pocket with the rest," said Jessie ; and she turned her pocket inside out, and getting up from her seat she looked all around her for it. "I must have dropped it somewhere. How unfortunate I am lately ! Let us go back a little way, Nellie, and look for it."

And they did so. They looked through the path, and on each side of it. Nellie continued to look even after Jessie had given it up.

"Perhaps you put it in your bosom, Jessie," said Nellie, who seemed determined to find it.

"Put it in my bosom !" exclaimed Jessie. "Oh, no, I did not ; I never put things in my bosom. Mamma don't like me to. She says it spoils my dresses ; and see, Nellie, I could not possibly have done so, my dress is so very high in the neck !"

"You may have done so this time though, Jessie ; at all events let's look. Such a

beautiful ribbon as that is worth taking some pains for ;” and guilty Nellie helped to take off Jessie’s cloak, and unbuttoned her dress behind, and examined her very closely ; but the pink plaid ribbon was not there. It was evidently lost.

“I knew I had not put it in my bosom,” said Jessie, almost crying and shivering with the cold. “But do, Nellie, make haste and button my frock. I shall catch my death, and mamma will reprove me for this as it is.”

“Oh, don’t tell your mamma, Jessie ; then she will not scold you.”

“Not tell mamma ! Why, I could not sleep if I should not. I tell mamma everything.”

It is not sin that makes people bright, and cheerful, and happy ; and as Nellie, after she had parted from Jessie, walked home alone, she began to feel very much ashamed of herself, and sorry for what she had done. She did not feel sorry because she had



broken God's commandment; but she felt sorry that she had treated Jessie so badly, and ashamed that she had done something so very like stealing.

"I don't see," said she to herself, as she walked along, "I don't see what I kept the ribbon for. I don't know what to do with it now I have it. I have not got a doll. I never had one in my life, nor ever shall have. My mother don't get things for me as Jessie's does for her."

Thus Nellie talked to herself, and by the time she reached the hut she was in a very ill humor and very unhappy. Her poor mother, who had been all day long at her work, and was tired, put it away when the time drew near for Nellie to come home, and stirred up the fire, and placed her own rocking-chair in the warmest corner for her, and looked cheerful, and met her with a pleasant smile when she came in.

But Nellie, guilty Nellie, now she was,

was cross, and would not cheer or talk with her mother at all, and soon after they had made their frugal supper of bread and milk she began to yawn, and said, "Come, mother, let us go to bed now ; I am tired."

The hut was very small, so the one room served for parlor, kitchen, and bedroom, and by the light of the fire and one tallow candle they proceeded to undress themselves. As Nellie took off her frock, her mother saw the ribbon all crumpled up.

"What is that?" said she to Nellie.

"Oh, it is just a bit of ribbon I found on the hillside twisted round a twig."

"It is a beautiful ribbon," said Mrs. Brown, as she smoothed it over her knee. "Did you try to find out whose it is, Nellie?"

"No, mother ; I thought as I found it I had a right to keep it."

"Nellie," said Mrs. Brown, "you have no right to keep it at all, and you must take it to school with you to-morrow, and show it to

the master, and let him show it to the school ; then, if no one claims it, you may keep it—not without.”

“I am sure I don’t want the ribbon,” said Nellie ; “I haven’t got anything to do with it. I never do have anything.”

Mrs. Brown felt very much hurt by what Nellie had said, and by her manner, and she sat still a few moments looking sadly into the fire.

“Nellie,” said she at last, “you have everything these poor hands can get for you. For you I work day after day at those rough barks and willows, and often when I can scarcely hold up my head or endure the soreness of my fingers. And are ingratitude and cruel reproaches to be my reward at last?”

“Well, I do suppose you do all you can, and I am sorry I spoke so, mother. But all the girls at school look nicer than I do, and have nice things sometimes, while I never do, and it seems to me it isn’t fair so many

should have more than they need, and others almost starve and freeze. But, mother, do come to bed, won't you?"


In the morning they were always very busy at the hut for a little while. Mrs. Brown prepared the breakfast, after which she milked her cow; and while she was milking and straining the milk, and putting it away, Nellie, though a very little girl for her age, would make the bed, clear off the breakfast-table, and put the room in order. And in the bustle and hurry this morning Mrs. Brown forgot about the ribbon, and Nellie managed to hide it away in a book in the closet. At school she got along as usual, for Jessie did not suspect that any one had taken the ribbon, and in a few days forgot all about it.

And Nellie, too, tried to forget it, for the remembrance of it made her unhappy. So when she did think of it, she would immediately drive it from her mind by play or

study, or talking with Jessie about the Fair. The Spirit of God, we are told in his precious book, the Bible, will not always strive with us, and I am sorry to say, in a very few days He seemed to go away from our poor little Nellie, for she ceased to feel so very badly about the pink ribbon, and when the day for the Fair arrived she was in her usual spirits.

## Chapter Fourth.

### THE FAIR.

HE Fair was gotten up by the religious people of all names in the village of —, in aid of a foreign mission, which had been reported by a returned missionary as being in great need. The interest in this good cause was so general as to reach even to the children, and Mr. Cole, not willing to deprive them of the opportunity to contribute their mite, consented to dismiss his school for that afternoon.

Mrs. Brown endeavored to dissuade Nellie from going, for the day, though clear and fine, was intensely cold, and Nellie, of late,

she thought, had not been well. There seemed too much excitement in her system. She did not rest as usual in her sleep, but would oftentimes start suddenly as if frightened, and was at times feverish. But Nellie's heart was bent upon going, and Mrs. Brown, not willing so much to disappoint her, set about getting her ready with all a mother's interest.

It is no wonder Nellie Brown sometimes felt discontented and unhappy. They were so poor, so very poor. Her clothes were faded and old-fashioned. Her bonnet—a summer straw, trimmed with a faded pink ribbon—was full a finger larger every way than was then the fashion of children's bonnets. Her cloak, too, was patched and ill-shapen, and to make her look a little smarter, Mrs. Brown pinned her own best collar round her neck, which only added to the oddity of her appearance. However, she looked proudly on her, and giving her a shil-

ling she could ill spare from her meager purse, which she told her to put in her mitten, and be very careful not to lose, she kissed her and opened the door for her, and Nellie started out for the Fair.

The day, I have said, was very cold, and fortunately for Nellie she had not gone farther than the little church when, on looking back, she saw an empty wood-sleigh in the road. She fell back and waited by the side of the fence till it came along, when she dropped a curtsey, and asked the man so prettily if she might ride, that he, quite pleased with her gentle manner, willingly stopped his horses, and taking her in very kindly set her on the board by his side, and drove her to the very gate of the Court House. Nellie thanked him for his kindness, and opening the gate she entered the long, wide walk which led to the Court House door.

The village was all astir, and people were



flocking to the Fair from every direction. Nellie walked slowly up the path, for though it was thronged with gaily-dressed little girls and merry boys dashing on to the Fair, she felt lonely and strange. A little before her in the path was an old lady who walked slowly too, as if she were feeble. She was dressed in a black satin cloak and velvet bonnet, and a fur tippet, and walked with a gold-headed cane.

Somehow, Nellie felt as if this old lady was something of a protection to her, and she determined to walk by her side. Presently the old lady, who was a good deal bent, looked sideways at her and smiled. Nellie was delighted, and thought her the most beautiful lady she had ever seen.

At the door the old lady took a pocket-book out of her bag, which Nellie noticed was made of black beads and was very pretty, and fumbled about a good while for a sixpence, which was the admittance fee ; but

she could not find it. "I'll trust you, ma'am," said the door-keeper to her, as he despaired of her finding it.

"No! no! it is here somewhere, and I must have it." And she took several bills out of the pocket-book, and held them in her hand while she searched the corners for the sixpence. "Oh, here it is at last!" said she, when she had found it. "I knew I had it!" And as she handed the man the sixpence she dropped the bills, and one of them fell at Nellie's feet.

The door-keeper instantly stooped to gather up the bills, and Nellie, who was perfectly screened from observation by the old lady's cloak, picked up the one at her feet, and involuntarily pushed it into her mitten—not the one in which was the shilling, however. The old lady went into the Fair, and Nellie, as soon as she had paid her admittance, followed after her. They entered a hall and went up a flight of stairs, and through an-

other short passage-way into an open door, where the bewildered little Nellie found herself in the midst of a scene more gay and beautiful than she had ever before seen, or even imagined.

It was a very long room, beautifully hung with wreaths of the ground pine, cedar, and hemlock. There were long rows of tables, covered with bright, beautiful things, and gay young girls attending them. For a while Nellie wandered about, gazing and staring at everything, entirely forgetful of the sixpence she had to spend, and of the ill-gotten bill in her mitten. Presently, however, she thought of both, and stood still for a moment, trying to think what she had better buy with them; and while she was thinking, she saw Jessie at the other end of the room. Their eyes met, and, for the first time in her life, Nellie Brown felt sorry to see Jessie. Jessie soon made her way to Nellie.

“Oh, Nellie, you little rogue! I am so

glad to see you; I am so glad you've come. How much money have you got? I have spent three shillings, and see, I have two left, which I am going to spend for you; so come along—don't mind the people—brush and crowd right by them. Do you like oysters?"

And without waiting for Nellie to answer her, Jessie took her by the hand and dragged her to an oyster table.

"Say," continued Jessie, as they stopped at the table, "say, Nellie, do you like oysters?"

"I don't know, Jessie," answered Nellie, now for the first time finding her voice. "I never tasted them."

"Never tasted oysters!—that's funny. Well, you'll like them, I know. They cost more than anything else in the room, and you ought to." And, going close up to the table, Jessie bought a large saucer of oysters and handed them to Nellie. Nellie did not

like the looks of this, to her, perfectly new dainty ; but to show Jessie she was grateful, she took the fork in her hand and tried to eat them.

“ Aren’t they good ? ” said Jessie, who really enjoyed the thought that, for once, Nellie had something good. “ Aren’t they fine, Nellie ? ” continued Jessie.

“ Yes.”

“ Why don’t you eat them, then ? ” said she, beginning to suspect the truth. “ If you like them, why don’t you eat them ? ”

“ Oh, I can’t,” said Nellie, now thoroughly disgusted, and obliged to own the truth.

“ Why didn’t you say you didn’t like them, Nellie ? I can eat them myself, and spend the other shilling for you.” And, with a right hearty relish, Jessie soon despatched the oysters. She was hardly through eating them, when a party of little girls came after her and made her go with them into another room, where there was a post-office.

Nellie no sooner found herself alone again than her thoughts returned to the bill and the best way of disposing of it. She took it out of her mitten and looked at it. It was a two-dollar bill, and seemed nothing short of a fortune to Nellie, and she felt herself surrounded by all that could possibly be desired in this world; yet she could not think of a single thing to buy. After looking and thinking a great while, the only definite thing that came into her mind was a glass of lemonade. She scarcely knew what lemonade was; but she had heard so many persons ask for it, that it seemed quite familiar to her, and she determined to buy a glass. She was a little creature, and without much difficulty soon pushed her way through the crowd to the lemonade table. It happened that just then there were no persons at that table, and Nellie very modestly went up and asked the young lady in attendance for a glass of lemonade; and when she

had drunk it, she handed her the two-dollar bill.

The young lady took the bill, and looking first at it, and then inquiringly at Nellie, she asked if she had not a sixpence, as that was the price of the glass.

"Yes," said Nellie, "I have a sixpence;" and taking her sixpence out of her mitten, she handed it to her, saying, "If you please, miss, I should like you to change the bill for me."

"What is your name, little girl?" the young lady asked, as she proceeded to count out the money.

"Nellie Brown, miss."

"Oh, yes, I remember; you live in the country, in the wood, don't you? and your mother makes baskets?"

"Yes," said Nellie.

"I think," continued the young lady, "your mother must feel very much for the poor missionaries, to give them two dollars; it is a great deal."



"She does, miss," said Nellie, a little frightened; "but mother made all Mr. Carter's corn-baskets for him, last summer, and he said it was an ugly job, and sent her this two dollars for me to spend at the Fair."

"Ah! that's it, is it?" said the young lady, and Nelly was glad enough to turn off with her change.

The young lady had given her two half-dollar pieces and four two-shilling pieces. No one seemed to think Nellie Brown of enough consequence to make room for her; so she had very little chance of seeing the things on the tables. Between every two tables, however, were evergreen trees hung with caps, bags, and other pretty things. These Nellie could see very well. On one was a brown linen apron, trimmed with green worsted braid. Such aprons were then very much worn by little girls, and Nellie would willingly have given all her money for this one. She asked the price of it, as soon as



she could make herself heard ; it was, to her great surprise, but five shillings, and she took it.

“Is there anything else you would like from my tree?” inquired the young saleswoman of Nellie, seeing she had more money.

“I don’t know, miss,” answered Nellie. “I should like something for my mother.”

“Does she wear caps?”

“Yes, and I should like a cap, if I have money enough.”

“Here is a very pretty one for four shillings—have you that much?”

“Yes, miss,” said Nellie ; and she bought the cap. What next to get she could not tell, and she began to feel a little uneasy at the thought of encountering Jessie with her extravagant treasures. Just then, too, a man entered the room and began to light the candles, and lamps, and tapers on the trees. Nellie had promised her mother not to stay late ; and though she thought everything

looked a great deal more beautiful for the light, she determined to buy one more thing and be off. She was standing opposite a tree hung with bags, purses, and fancy baskets of almost every imaginable description.

“If I could only get one of those bags!” thought she, and she passed over to the tree. To her surprise, the bag was but a half-dollar, and she had still three shillings left; and she would have bought some other foolish thing, but just then she saw Jessie, away off in another part of the room, looking all over, apparently, for somebody. Nellie’s heart told her it was for her. Guilt always makes us mean and cowardly; and, rather than see Jessie, her kind, loving friend, Nellie made for the door, with the three shillings unspent.

It seemed to this excited child that she had been a very little while at the Fair; and she was almost frightened, on coming into the air, to find how late it was. The last

tints of the setting sun were almost faded from the sky, and the crescent moon, with her attendant star, was far up, casting her beautiful light on everything. But it was cold, very cold; and, as Nellie hurried on, she would every now and then feel a chill, which seemed to creep to her very heart, and often—oh, how often!—she would look behind her, in hopes of again seeing the kind woodman who had given her a lift in the afternoon; but he did not come, and on she trudged. One by one the stars came out, till the whole heaven was crowded with them, and the crisp, cold snow twinkled and sparkled in their pale light. Still on she went.

When she got to the little church she felt almost discouraged, and thought for a moment to rest herself in the porch; but she was a superstitious child, and the very thought seemed to lend her new strength, and with a quickened step she struggled up

the hill. On reaching the top she was startled to see a figure very distinctly in the moonbeams, crouching along by the side of the wood. Her first impulse was to run back again down the hill; but, on looking a second time at the figure, she recognized her mother.

“My poor, poor child!” cried Mrs. Brown, on coming up to her, “are you almost frozen?” And taking Nellie under her own cloak, and putting one arm around her, she almost carried her to the hut. There was a good fire on the hearth, and as soon as Nellie got warm her mother began to notice her things, and to question her about them.

“Who gave you these things, Nellie?” said she.

Nellie had anticipated all this, and, on her way home, had made up her mind to tell her mother that Mr. Carter had sent her two dollars by Jessie, to spend for the missionaries, but that she thought she had better

bring a part of the money home for her ; and then Nellie gave her the three shillings. Mrs. Brown was perfectly satisfied with Nellie's story.

"How good those Carters are to you, Nellie!" said she ; "and I hope you will always deserve their kindness."

"I hope so, mother," said this naughty little girl, who was fast becoming a great sinner. "But, mother, won't you come to bed now? I'm so tired."

Mrs. Brown put the things nicely away in the little closet, and then they went to bed, where we will leave them for awhile, and return to the Fair.

---

After the Fair was over, and the people had all gone to their homes, the doors were locked, and those ladies who had sold at the tables were left alone with a gentleman who had been chosen by them to preside upon the occasion, to count over the proceeds of

the sale. The gentleman sat at a round table, with a pencil and paper before him, and each lady, in turn, brought the money she had taken at her table, and with his assistance counted it, and he marked the sum down on his paper. Now Miss Porter, the young lady who sold the lemonade, was rather ambitious to have taken the most money, and as she presented her immense bowl of sixpences, with the two-dollar bill exposed to full view on top, a general smile was excited.

“Who on earth,” exclaimed one, “bought two dollars’ worth of lemonade? It is the most curious investment of the evening, I’m sure.”

“I do not wonder you ask,” said Miss Porter. “No one, however, bought two dollars’ worth of lemonade; I changed the bill for little Nellie Brown; she said Mr. Carter gave her the money to spend for the missionaries.”

"Very likely," answered another young girl. "You know the children say Jessie has taken such a fancy to that child; and I do not wonder, for notwithstanding her fantastic dress, she is lovely looking; and do you mind how prettily she speaks? She must have caught her manner from Jessie."

"Oh, no, indeed," said Miss Porter; "it is natural to the child; she speaks and looks precisely like her mother, the basket woman. I have often talked with her in the street."

"But why do you look so seriously about it, Miss Eagle?" inquired the gentleman, addressing a young lady across the table immediately opposite him. "I am sure there is nothing so very incredible in the story. Mr. Carter is a generous man, and passionately fond of his little daughter."

"Oh! I don't know that I ought to speak such a suspicion," said Miss Eagle, looking quite troubled; "but I can't help thinking it strange"—

"I thought so, too," interrupted Miss Porter; "but there is something so touching and refined in the little beggar, I was really afraid to question her. Perhaps I ought to have done so, though."

"No," said Miss Eagle, "I should not have done so any more than you, but for this circumstance I was going to tell you. It is very strange my Aunt Whimple should have lost at the Fair the very sum this poor child has spent."

"Let us hear all about it," said the gentleman, now thoroughly interested. "I confess the matter begins to look a little dark."

"My Aunt Whimple, you all know, is not rich now; but she has a truly missionary spirit, and she has denied herself really necessary comforts that she might spend ten dollars at this Fair; and on coming into the Fair she sat down by my table, and counted over her money, saying she had dropped it at the door, and was afraid she had lost



some; and sure enough she had lost two dollars. I asked her if it was in change, and she said no—it was a two-dollar bill she had lost. Now, I do not accuse Nellie Brown of having found and kept it; but it is strange the child should have had just that sum.”

“There is but one thing for us to do, young ladies, that I can see. It is clear the child must have found Miss Whimple’s money; but to prove it, Miss Porter must go to Mr. Carter with Nellie’s story, and if it turns out that Nellie has done wrong, must go to Nellie’s mother, accuse her of it, and get back the things.”

“I cannot, indeed; I cannot do it,” said Miss Porter.

“Pray, why not, miss? You need not feel so very delicate. People who can steal can generally bear to be found out.”

“But perhaps the poor little thing did not know it was stealing. She does not look in the least like a thief.”


“Now that’s all very fine sentiment, Miss Porter ; but I must say it is nonsense—just as if there is any one in this gospel-hearing, praying community who does not know that keeping another person’s money is stealing.”

I will not prolong this conversation, which was carried on with some spirit. Enough to say, the gentleman at last convinced Miss Porter that it was her duty to go, telling her she might get Parson Phelps, the minister of the country church, to go with her, as the Browns belonged to his parish.

“Very well,” said Miss Porter, “if I must, I must ; but I cannot possibly go till Saturday, and then I will not without the parson. I mean I cannot go to Mrs. Brown’s before Saturday. I will drive over to Mr. Carter’s to-morrow evening—though it seems very unnecessary, it is so evident that Nellie found Miss Whimple’s money.”

## Chapter Fifth.

### THE DISCOVERY.

OMING into the chill air so suddenly from the heated room of the Fair gave Nellie a cold, and all night she was restless; but in the morning she was so much better her mother let her go to school, though rather unwillingly. She met her playmates as usual, and though the Fair was much talked about, she did not show the least consciousness of her guilt.

On Saturday morning the little girls were all assembled, as they often were, at the brow of the hill, planning a slide after some new fashion, when Jessie, rather hurriedly,

came into their midst, and asked where Nellie was.

"She has not come yet," was the answer of the little girls. "Is there anything the matter, Jessie?"

"No," said Jessie, "only I want Nellie;" and without another word she walked out of the wood. She walked till she saw Nellie coming along the edge of the wood, in her little patched cloak and her dinner basket on her arm. As soon as Jessie saw Nellie she ran to meet her, and Nellie ran to meet Jessie.

"Oh, Nellie, Nellie! you stole"—

"Stole what?" said Nellie.

"Miss Whimple's two dollars," said Jessie, clasping her hands in agony. "Oh, Nellie! how could you?"

"I did not steal it—I found it."

"But you knew it was hers. The door-keeper says you must have known it. Nellie, Nellie, how I have loved you! and mamma says I must not have you for my friend any

more." And Jessie turned and ran back to school.

Nellie, pale as marble, and as cold, stood for some time looking at Jessie as she ran away from her. Then she, too, turned and went back to the hut.

"Well," said Mrs. Brown, as Nellie came into the hut, "what has brought you back? Are you sick?"

"Yes, mother, my head feels badly, and I do not want to go to school."

"You need not go, then, Nellie. I thought you were not well this morning."

Nellie took off her things and sat down by the little front window. She was very sad and troubled; but her mother did not notice it. She was sitting by the fire trying to make a much finer kind of basket than she had ever before made of split straw, and she was so used to being alone with her work that she quite forgot that Nellie was in the room at all.

Nellie sat thus by the window a long while. Presently she heard sleigh-bells, and then she saw a fine sleigh, with a gentleman and lady in it, and in another moment they had stopped at the gate of the hut. The lady was the same who changed the bill for Nellie, and the gentleman was the aged minister of the country church. Well did Nellie know who they were, and why they had come, and without telling her mother of the arrival of the strangers, she went out of the hut at the side door. She trembled like a leaf when, standing outside the door, she heard the dreaded rap and entrance of these persons, and she would have listened there, only she was afraid her mother would open the door and call her in. So she went and stood behind the cow-house, determined not to answer if she were called. She trembled very much and was very cold. Still, there she stood long after she heard the sleigh-bells, as they moved off and down the road.

Nellie was in hopes her mother would call her, but she did not. So after a long while she came from behind the cow-house, and timidly opened the door, as if afraid of her own mother—as indeed she was.

Mrs. Brown had left the seat by the fire, and was standing in the center of the room a pitiable object. She was as pale as possible. Her hands were clasped and her lips compressed, while in her very attitude as well as countenance there was an expression of indescribable agony—a mother weeping for her child.

Nellie was frightened, and thought perhaps her mother was dying. She ran to her, and clasping her knees and bursting into tears, she exclaimed, “Mother! mother! don’t look so, mother. I did not know it was so wicked; indeed I did not. What will they do with me, mother?”

“My poor, poor child!” said Mrs. Brown, raising Nellie from her feet and drawing her

closely to her bosom, "God have mercy on us! I have been hungry and cold, child, but I never thought to come to this. It is my fault! my fault! Oh, yes! I have toiled like a mother to keep this poor little body clothed and fed; but I have forgotten my old father's dying advice, always to remember God and the Bible. Yes, yes! child darling, 'tis your own mother who has wronged you."

I will not dwell any longer on this painful scene, but return to the visit of the minister and the young lady. The aged minister was struck by Mrs. Brown's distress, with remorse for his many years of neglect of this needy portion of his flock, and with great earnestness and sincerity he urged upon her consideration the immediate necessity of a change of life, and he exacted from her a promise henceforth regularly to attend public worship, and to begin a daily course of prayer and reading of the Scriptures.



Mrs. Brown, too, was struck with remorse, for she knew it was not from ignorance of the way of life she had neglected her child, but that the cares of this life had choked out that better care.

Her father had died an old man and a Christian while she was yet in the bloom of womanhood, and through a long illness he had not ceased to instruct her in the ways of God; and he died thinking he had planted in her heart that good seed which he knew would not fail to spring up and bear fruit to eternal life.

But the promise is to those who bring up their children in the right way, that they will not depart from it. He had not led her childhood through this good and pleasant path—it had passed in utter ignorance of God. He had not walked in it himself till his sickness, and so when poverty, and widowhood, and unremitting toil became her portion, it is not, perhaps, surprising that she


forgot her duty—forgot her aged father—forgot her God! And it is not surprising that thus neglected, thus ignorant, her own child should have fallen a victim to the trying temptations which assailed her.

Nor was it right in those who became acquainted with her guilt to judge her as harshly as they would a child whose advantages had been greater.

It is education (in its just sense) which makes the difference in children—I mean the moral difference—and the cultivation of the heart which makes them conscientious and enables them quickly to perceive the shades of right and wrong. Nellie knew it was wicked to steal. Jessie would have known that keeping back the comb which she had not stolen, was in the sight of God stealing, and this knowledge, in a heart willing and desirous to please God, would have saved her from all these sins.

## Chapter Sixth.

### NELLIE BROWN GOES TO CHURCH.

 HAVE said that the aged minister who disclosed poor Nellie's fault to Mrs. Brown, exacted from her a promise to reform her manner of living, and particularly that she would go to church. So on the fourth Sunday from the events of the last chapter, notwithstanding Nellie's painful reluctance, she determined to go to church, and before they made their frugal breakfast Mrs. Brown told Nellie to make herself as tidy as possible, for that she must go with her to church. Nellie saw that her mother was resolute; and while she was preparing the lunch she put on her best frock, and the

little old cloak and straw bonnet, and they went.

The service had commenced when they got there, and they quietly took their seats near the door, and for some time were not observed. Presently, however, after the second lesson was read, and the congregation stood in singing, they were discovered by the little eyes that peered over the backs of the pews from every part of the church.

Nellie was very much solemnized by coming into church, and as she listened to the devout prayer of the minister she felt that God's eye was upon her, and this feeling enabled her to bear the gaze of the children for some time with great humility.

But when the service was over, and the congregation began to disperse, she was made to feel the shame of her situation to an extent she could not bear. The story of her sin had been made so public that not a child in the whole vicinity was ignorant of it.

Her mother noticed that Nellie was the object of universal attention, and taking her by the hand she walked through the crowded porch with a dignity which her superiors might sometimes be glad to assume.

Still, the unfeeling gaze of curiosity was not daunted, and they felt that every eye was fixed upon them. And as they passed along, their ears caught the whisper, as it seemed to fly from mouth to mouth, "That's she!" "That's she!" and rude boys would peep under Nellie's bonnet and say coarse words to her. But the most trying thing of all to Nellie was the fact that Jessie, as she was stepping into her carriage, turned and looked at her without speaking to her. Oh, you happy children, who have never known disgrace, you cannot know at all what this poor little child suffered then! But you can thank God that He has delivered you from this evil, and I hope you will.

Nellie and her mother hastened home

without exchanging any words with each other, but not without intense feeling. Mrs. Brown felt that her child's punishment was greater than she could bear, and her heart became excited and rebellious towards those who, professing a religion of love, could so cruelly treat a child. But towards Nellie she was more than ever tender. When they got home she made the fire and prepared their tea, without once calling on Nellie for assistance; and when all was done, she drew the little table up to the fire, close by where Nellie was sitting.

Nellie did not want any supper, and told her mother so; but Mrs. Brown had made a bit of toast very nicely for her, and, handing it to her with a cup of tea, she said, "Eat a little—do, Nellie, for my sake."

Nellie was much touched by this tenderness on the part of her mother, and for her sake, as she said, she tried to eat of the toast, but she could not; and pushing the plate and

cup both from her, she turned her chair from the table towards the fire, and burst into tears.

“I can’t bear it, mother!” said she, “I can’t bear it! How they all looked at me, and pointed their fingers at me, and whispered about me! And Jessie!—Jessie would not speak to me! I wish I was dead, mother—I do!”

Mrs. Brown could not say anything to soothe Nellie, she knew ; so she very quietly cleared the table, and then took her pail and went out to milk her cow.

When Nellie knew that she was alone, she kneeled down by the side of the rocking-chair, and burying her face in the cushion, she repeated the Lord’s Prayer, for she felt that she could never be happy again till her sin was forgiven her. And, with her head bowed, she said over and over the petition, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.” And while

Nellie was praying, suddenly, as if whispered by the Spirit of God, those words Jessie had taught her came into her mind—  
*“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

“Oh!” said Nellie, “if God will help me—and Jessie says He will always help us if we ask Him—I will confess to Jessie all about the comb, and—and that ribbon—yes, if God will help me, I will.”

Just then Mrs. Brown came in with the milk, and when she had taken care of it, and sat down by the fire, close by Nellie, for the evening, Nellie told her that she wanted very much indeed to see Jessie Carter.

“Not to-night, surely, though?” said Mrs. Brown.

“Yes, mother, to-night, if you will go for her.”


Mrs. Brown knew that it would be useless to go for Jessie that night, as Mr. Carter



would never let her come to the hut at so late an hour, particularly now they were disgraced ; and though she felt willing to do anything in the world for Nellie, she told her she could not go until morning.

## Chapter Seventh.

### JESSIE'S VISIT TO THE HUT.

N the morning Mrs. Brown did not feel any more inclined to go for Jessie than she had done the night before. She was troubled, and wondered why Nellie so much wished to see her.

And thinking, or rather hoping, the child had forgotten that she had promised to go, when her morning duties were done, she took from its place on the top of the closet her box of split straws, and seating herself in the corner, as usual, began to work. But Nellie, in her turn, now looked troubled, and, with tears in her eyes, reminded her of her promise. So Mrs. Brown rather reluc-

tantly left her work, and putting on her bonnet and cloak, went for Jessie.

During her mother's absence, Nellie Brown experienced a great many different feelings. At one moment she almost regretted having sent for Jessie at all, and thought to hide herself and not see her, after all, rather than expose her sin any more to her pure eyes. Then she would remember the sweet feeling of peace—the first she had known in months—which came into her heart when, on bended knees, she promised that, if God would help her, she would confess all her sin; and, falling again on her knees, she prayed yet more earnestly than before that she might have strength to keep her good resolution."

God, who is always our best friend in trouble, if we go to Him in prayer, did not fail Nellie now, and she rose from her knees composed and resolute. And when Mrs. Brown returned with Jessie, she was far less embarrassed than Jessie was, and even met

her with a smile, as if glad to see her; only, when Jessie offered to kiss her, she gently pushed her from her, saying, "Not yet, Jessie."

When Mrs. Brown and Jessie had taken off their things and warmed themselves, Nellie took Jessie by the hand and led her to that part of the room where the bed was. Her mother was still sitting sadly by the fire with her back towards them; "For," said Nellie, "I wish you, mother, to hear all I have to say to Jessie, only don't look at me."

"Jessie," said Nellie, immediately, and without any hesitation in her voice or manner, "Jessie do you remember your tortoise-shell comb?"

"Yes," said Jessie, starting and changing color.

"Well," continued Nellie, "I did not steal that comb, but it has brought me into all this trouble—all this sin and sorrow." And Nellie told Jessie the story of the comb from

the beginning to the end—how she had struggled and struggled in her own strength to tell Jessie the truth, and to give back the comb, but could not, from fear of becoming a thief in her eyes and losing her love, which had been such a comfort to her—and then how she grew naughty all the time after she once made up her mind never to tell her ; how she disliked to think of God and say her prayers.

“Oh, oh !” exclaimed the weeping Jessie, “why didn’t you tell me? I would never have thought you a thief! I would have forgiven you, and have taught you, as well as I could, your duty, and the great sin of doing such things. Poor, poor Nellie, I am so sorry for you !”

And Jessie tried to throw her arms around Nellie’s neck again, but Nellie pushed her from her as before, saying: “Not yet; oh, not yet!” and for a moment she closed her eyes and clasped her hands as if in prayer.

Then coming closer to Jessie again, she put her hand in her bosom, and taking thence the pink plaid ribbon, she held it up before Jessie's eyes, and said, in a voice even more subdued than ever, "Do you know this ribbon, Jessie? this pink plaid ribbon?"

"Oh, yes," said Jessie, faintly, and hardly able to stand; "it is my ribbon. I thought I lost it in the wood."

"And so you did lose it, Jessie, and I never would have stolen it. I found it twisted round a twig on the hillside, and kept it. I don't know now why I did it, only I kept doing bad things after I broke the comb, and I was never happy after that, do what I would; but I did not know it was really stealing, though. I knew it was very, very wrong. Will you forgive me, Jessie? Can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, Nellie! forgive you! Oh, Nellie, how sorry—how sorry I feel for you!"

And this time Nellie let Jessie kiss her, "for," said she, "you know all now. Jessie," continued Nellie, after they had become a little more composed, "what an unhappy child I have been ever since the Fair! I have thought a great deal about my guilt, and I have prayed a great deal. Yes, Jessie, often and often in the night I have waked and asked God to forgive me all for Christ's sake; but I was not happy."

"No," said Jessie, "because you did not acknowledge all your sin. Now you feel happy, don't you?"

"Yes, I am happier now. Only when I think how good God has been to me—how long He has borne with me—how great He is, and how great, how very great, my sin has been, I am so afraid He will not forgive me! Do you think He will, Jessie?"

"I know He will; I know that He will, Nellie! Don't you remember the verse I taught you on the seat between the trees?"

‘If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.’ ”

“Oh, yes! it was that verse coming into my mind that made me confess to you, Jessie. Ought I confess to the minister, too, Jessie—to Mr. Phelps?”

“No, no, indeed; the comb didn’t belong to Mr. Phelps, nor the ribbon either. You have never injured him, and he shall never know one word about, nor any other person but mamma. God forgives us our sins for Christ’s sake—for His precious blood, which was shed on the cruel cross for sin, that sinners might, through repentance and faith in His name, be washed in that blood, and made pure from sin and fit for the life eternal. If you had confessed to me about the comb, I would have taught you your duty as well as I could, and you never would have kept the money, and then everybody would not have known about it.”

“Yes,” said Nellie, crying, “everybody



does know about it, and not one of the scholars has spoken to me since—it is so hard, Jessie.”

“It is,” said Jessie, “and I did not speak to you. It was wicked and cruel in me; but mamma said I must not have you for my friend, and I thought it was right to show you that I thought you had acted wrong. Can you forgive me, Nellie?”

Nellie assured Jessie of her perfect forgiveness, and handing her the Bible, she asked her to find the verse—the precious verse—*if we confess our sins*—“for,” said she, “I mean to learn the chapter.”

Jessie would have remained much longer with Nellie, but just then Mr. Carter came for her in the sleigh, and she was obliged reluctantly to say good-bye to Nellie.

The spring is very lagging in that part of the State where the incidents of this story occurred, and in consequence of bad roads and unpleasant weather, Jessie did not visit

the hut again till one day in May, at noon, when she wandered off from her school companions, determined to make Nellie a visit. As she walked along she felt sadly, and, in her mind, ran over all the touching circumstances of her friendship for Nellie Brown, and she arrived at the hut without noticing that there was no "curling smoke arising from that rustic roof," or any other signs of life about the place. The gate, too, she found fastened with a rope. Her heart almost misgave her, as she stood for a moment wondering what it could all mean; and yet hope was so strong in her nature, that she determined to climb the fence and find out whether they had gone on an expedition to sell baskets, or gone away for good. She found the door locked, of course, and turned to look in at the window, before which she anxiously noticed there was no little blue curtain, as usual.

She found the hut entirely empty, both of

furniture and inmates; there was not a thing left; even the ashes had been taken up, and the hearth nicely swept. Jessie stood looking in at the little forsaken window some minutes; then, heart-sick, she sat down on the door-step, and burying her face in her hands, she wept sad, sad tears of sympathy for the sorrows of her friend Nellie Brown.

---

Several years passed away, and Jessie Carter had never been able to learn anything of the Browns, till one evening a box was left for her by a stranger at the farm-house. On opening the box she found it to contain a letter and a comb—a tortoise-shell comb—precisely like the one Nellie Brown had destroyed years before. Scarcely noticing the comb, she tore open the letter and read it aloud to her father and mother. It was as follows:

NEW YORK, *July 1st*, 18—.

Remembering the trying friendship of our

childhood, Jessie—for by that sweet name I must once more address you—I feel assured you will be glad to hear from me. The mere writing your dear name so overcomes me, so fills my very soul with recollections of the past, that I am fearful I shall not be able to write much. This comb, which I send you by a person who will pass through the village of —, I have had for three years; I bought it with the very first money I earned over what was absolutely necessary for our comfort, but I have never till now been able to send it to you. I know you would like me to retrace the past, from our parting at the hut, on the day of my blessed confession to you; but it would make my letter quite too long. I could not bear to leave without a parting word to you; but from the day of your visit to us, my mother could not rest till we were away and forever from everything connected with my cruel life there. And Providence seemed to smile upon her

desire, and opened a way for us. A basket-maker whom we knew came to live in the cottage by the willow swamp, and hearing from my mother that we wished to leave the country, he offered to take our cow and all our things, for which he paid us twenty dollars. My mother worked night and day making baskets all through the rainy weather of that long, disagreeable spring, and sold them at a neighboring village to the amount of five dollars, and this was the capital with which we left the hut in the wood to enter upon a new life in this great city. After walking, as you know we were obliged to do, twenty miles, we reached the Erie Canal, and from there worked our passage to this city, having only spent in the journey five dollars. We did not meet with as many discouragements as you would imagine in this world of strangers. Our twenty dollars was our passport to the heart of a very good, but poor and penurious woman, who let us one

of two rooms she had rented for herself. The basket market was excellent, and in a little while we were more comfortably fixed than we had ever been in our lives before. We came here determined to live new and Christian lives, and as soon as we could make ourselves at all decent in appearance we determined to go to church; but, do you know, we had some difficulty, as we were strangers, in finding one. The woman (our landlady) told us "she didn't believe there was no meetin' in the city with such an outlandish name as Episcopal, and that for her part she could sing and pray with the Methodists near by, and be thankful, and she guessed she was as good as we any day." We spent two Sundays looking in and out of the different places of worship in vain, but the third Sunday we clothed ourselves as nicely as we could, and stood in one of the principal streets till we saw some ladies with Prayer-books in their hands. We fol-

lowed them, and soon found ourselves where we would be ; and Jessie, oh, Jessie ! it was just as you said—everything was so heavenly ! and I love it. But I shall tire you if I write so long a letter. The minister in a few Sundays found us out and came to see us, and has been a kind friend to us ever since. It is time I should tell you the best thing I have to say. I have been baptized and confirmed, and received at the table of our Lord, and I feel in the depths of my heart that I am accepted there—that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven me all my sin, and though the events of my childhood can never cease to sadden me at times, yet the general tenor of my life is peaceful and happy. I am married to an excellent young man whom I earnestly love. He knows all, but does not love me any the less for it. My mother is still alive, but she is so feeble I feel she will soon go home. She has never been a cheerful woman since my



trouble, but we trust she is a faithful Christian. God bless you, Jessie Carter! and may you ever feel the sweet peace, the unspeakable blessing, of that forgiveness which is the portion of your old friend and school-mate,

NELLIE.

A month or so after the receipt of the above package and letter, Jessie Carter was seated at her window, one cheerful summer morning, when a neat, light carriage and pony drove up to her door. She had just then been thinking of Nellie Brown, when in the lady-like looking person who stepped into her room she recognized her old friend. By her side was a pretty child, with curling ringlets and a happy smile.

"I have brought you little Jessie," exclaimed the mother, her eyes suffusing with tears. "I wish her to know her mother's best friend—one who first taught her to pray—and I trust your"—



Here her words were broken short by Jessie's embraces. "Dear Nellie Brown," she said—"for I must for once still call you that name—how delighted I am to see you! Oh, Nellie, Nellie! how could you leave me without one word of forgiveness? for I am the one that needed forgiveness, not having half done my duty." And so they met with the warmest affection.

That day was a lively one for the two friends. Over the old familiar places they went. The old school-house still stood in the same happy vale. The two streams still blended their waters, and went, reflecting the blue sky, down the meadow together. Even the very barrel under which the comb—the tortoise-shell comb—that first cause of all Nellie's transgressions—was hid, still gathered in its moss-covered sides the rain from the sky. And Jessie and Nellie, though pleased and rejoicing, could not look on the scene without shedding a tear.













